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Title:

Address at the Annual Conference of Aust. Assoc. of Permanent Building Societies

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ADDRESS BY DON DUNSTAN, PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AT THE OPENING
OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF AUST. ASSOC. OF PERMANENT BUILDING
SOCIETIES.

1/4/71.

MR. SORENSEN, MR. ADAMSON, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

FEW AMBITIONS ARE MORE FUNDAMENTAL OR MORE WIDESPREAD AMONG AUSTRALIANS THAN THE DESIRE FOR HOME OWNERSHIP. OUR RATE OF HOME OWNERSHIP IS AMONG THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD AND THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD OF LESSENING IN THE DEMAND. "A PLACE OF OUR OWN" REMAINS PERHAPS THE MOST POTENT CONCEPT MOTIVATING THE YOUNG MARRIEDS, THE MIGRANTS AND THOSE AUSTRALIANS WHO DON'T ALREADY SPEND THEIR WEEKENDS BEHIND A LAWNMOWER OR A PAINTBRUSH.

THE GROWTH OF THE NUMBER OF PERMANENT BUILDING SOCIETIES FROM 40 TO 150 BETWEEN 1963 AND LAST YEAR AND THE ANNUAL RATE OF LOANS ADVANCED FROM 32-MILLION DOLLARS TO 330-MILLION IN THE SAME PERIOD IS DRAMATIC PROOF OF THIS. FURTHER EVIDENCE IS THAT AS AN INDUSTRY YOUR TOTAL ASSETS HAVE NOW PASSED THE 1,000-MILLION LEVEL.

PAGE 2.

PRIVATE HOUSING IS, OF COURSE, OF BASIC CONCERN BOTH TO YOUR ASSOCIATION AND TO US AS A GOVERNMENT. THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS THE LARGEST SINGLE PROVIDER OF RESIDENTIAL HOUSING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA THROUGH THE BUILDING PROGRAMME OF THE HOUSING TRUST AND THE LOAN OPERATIONS OF THE STATE BANK. AND NOT ONLY ARE WE BOTH DEEPLY INVOLVED IN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, BUT IT SEEMS WE SHARE A CONCERN WITH THE FORM THAT DEVELOPMENT WILL TAKE. YOUR ORGANISERS, IN THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THIS CONFERENCE WHICH THEY SENT TO ME, REFERRED TO A GREATER ROLE FOR BUILDING SOCIETIES IN THE SEVENTIES IN SLUM CLEARANCE, URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CITIES. THIS IS THE KEY TO THE FUTURE OF PRIVATE HOUSING IN AUSTRALIA. THE TASKS OF ARCHITECTS, PLANNERS AND BUILDERS HAVE BECOME INFINITELY MORE COMPLEX IN THE HUNDRED OR SO YEARS SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE FIRST BUILDING SOCIETIES.

PAGE 3.

IT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH FOR HOUSES TO BE BUILT AND NEW AREAS DEVELOPED SOLELY BY COMMERCIAL LAISSEZ-FAIRE WITH NO PLANNING GUIDELINES. PEOPLE TODAY DEMAND, AND RIGHTLY, THAT THEY LIVE IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS BOTH VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE AND SOCIALLY EFFICIENT. WE ALREADY LIVE IN THE MOST URBANISED SOCIETY IN THE WORLD, IN CITIES WHICH ARE CREATING - OR WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR - PROBLEMS OF POLLUTION AND DISLOCATION ON AN UNPRECEDENTED AND HORRENDOUS SCALE. RIBBON DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN SPRAWL ARE TWO OF THE UGLIEST BUT UNFORTUNATELY MOST APPROPRIATE PHRASES WHICH CAN BE APPLIED TO AUSTRALIAN CITIES. IN ADELAIDE IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT PEOPLE ARE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT AN ENDLESSLY SPRAWLING CITY. THERE WILL BE FURTHER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA AS IT STANDS BUT I BELIEVE IT WILL BE WITHIN ALREADY OBSERVABLE LIMITS. I FORESEE, COMBINED WITH CONSOLIDATION OF DEVELOPMENT IN OUTER METROPOLITAN AREAS, AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR OVERALL, INTEGRATED MODERN INNER-CITY DEVELOPMENT.

PAGE 4.

WE HAVE, TOO, ALREADY ENTERED A PERIOD IN WHICH NEW TECHNOLOGIES WILL OFFER DESIGNERS AND BUILDERS TREMENDOUS SCOPE IN APPLYING NEW MATERIALS AND METHODS TO HOUSING PROBLEMS. IT WILL BE THEIR TASK, AND CHALLENGE, TO ENSURE THAT THESE NEW METHODOLOGIES ARE USED IN WAYS WHICH RELATE TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE WHO WILL LIVE IN THEIR PRODUCTS. A HOUSE MUST BE MUCH MORE THAN MERELY "A MACHINE FOR LIVING IN". FOR INSTANCE, ONE OF THE MOST UNFORTUNATE CONCOMITANTS OF DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN A LOSS OF PRIVACY. PLANNERS MUST GIVE ATTENTION TO APPLYING NEW TECHNIQUES IN WAYS WHICH WILL ENABLE PEOPLE TO ESCAPE FROM OTHERS WHEN THEY WISH AND TO BE WITH OTHERS WHEN THEY WISH AND IN WHICH THE QUALITY OF FAMILY LIFE CAN BE ENHANCED.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THESE MATTERS BY ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS AND THAT WE MUST DO MORE IN AUSTRALIA TO ENCOURAGE A SPIRIT OF ARCHITECTURAL ADVENTURE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN COMMITTING OURSELVES TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF GRANDIOSE AND DYSFUNCTIONAL OPERA HOUSE AND STADIA BUT RATHER IT IMPLIES OFFERING AUSTRALIANS A CHOICE BEYOND A TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT BUNGALOW IN A DISTANT AND DUSTY SUBURB. THIS IS AN AREA IN WHICH THE BUILDING SOCIETIES CAN PLAY A VERY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE, FOR DECISIONS YOU TAKE ON ALLOCATION OF LOAN FUNDS CAN EXERCISE A PROFOUND INFLUENCE ON THE DIRECTIONS TO BE TAKEN. THE TRADITIONAL BUNGALOW MID AN ALLOTMENT IN AN OUTER SUBURB VARYING ONLY marginally FROM ITS NEIGHBOUR NOT ONLY CONTRIBUTES TO THE DRAB CONFORMITY SO EFFECTIVELY SATIRISED BY ROBIN BOYD AND BARRY HUMPHRIES BUT DEVELOPMENTS OF THIS KIND - ALTHOUGH CHEAP FOR THE BUILDERS AND DEVELOPERS - IMPOSE GREAT BUDGETARY PROBLEMS ON GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

THEY ARE EXPENSIVE IN TERMS OF CRECHES, SCHOOLS, TRANSPORT, WATER AND OTHER SERVICES WHICH MUST BE PROVIDED. ONCE AGAIN TOO LITTLE ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THESE FACTORS IN THE PAST. THE COMMONWEALTH-STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT, THE STRUCTURE OF STATE GOVERNMENT BUDGETS AND MONEY ADVANCED TO BUILDING SOCIETIES THEMSELVES DO NOT RELATE SUFFICIENTLY TO OVERALL COMMUNITY COSTS. IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO FACE THESE ISSUES AS FAR AS IT CAN AND TO PRODUCE PLANNING SCHEMES WHICH WILL INVOLVE REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ATTRACTIVE TO PRIVATE DEVELOPERS, BUILDERS, ARCHITECTS AND HOME OWNERS ALIKE. THEY WILL INCLUDE NOT ONLY TOWER UNITS BUT WALK-UP FLATS, CLUSTER HOUSING AND PATIO HOUSING ALL WITH THE INTENTION OF GIVING THE HOME BUYER A CHOICE WHICH, TOO FREQUENTLY, HE HAS LACKED IN THE PAST.

PAGE 7.

WE INTEND TO PROVIDE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INNER-CITY AREAS TO AVOID PROBLEMS OF DECAY OF THE KIND NOW AFFLICTING MANY AMERICAN CITY CENTRES. WE ARE ENCOURAGING MANUFACTURERS OF NEW BUILDING MATERIALS, FITTINGS AND SYSTEMS. IN COLONEL LIGHT'S CITY THERE SHOULD BE NO NEED TO POINT UP THE VIRTUES OF PLANNING. PLAN WE MUST, NOT BY MEANS OF ARBITRARY BUREAUCRATIC IMPOSITIONS WHICH STIFLE NEW DEVELOPMENT (IN FACT WE ARE WORKING OUT NEW PROCEDURES TO REDUCE EXCESSIVE INTERFERENCE IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS) BUT PLANNING IN A WAY WHICH PROVIDES A STRUCTURAL UNDERPINNING TO VISION. ONE HAS ONLY TO LOOK AROUND OUR CITY TO SEE HOW COLONEL LIGHT'S DREAM HAS FALLEN SHORT OF REALITY. AND THIS AESTHETIC AND SOCIAL SHORTFALL IS NOTHING COMPARED WITH THE DISASTER AND PARALYSIS WHICH WILL ENGULF US IF WE FAIL TO MAKE PROPER PROVISION NOW.

PAGE 8.

THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY IS THE GOVERNMENT'S AND IT'S ONE IN WHICH THE COMMONWEALTH SHOULD PARTICIPATE. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO ACCEPT THAT REDEVELOPMENT IS THEIR CONCERN AT A NATIONAL LEVEL MUST SEVERELY RESTRICT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE GOVERNMENT ACTION. BUT WE ARE DETERMINED TO DO ALL WE CAN. THE BUILDING SOCIETY MOVEMENT ALSO HAS A VERY IMPORTANT PART TO PLAY OF ITS OWN. MR. PRESIDENT, I HAVE GREAT PLEASURE IN NOW FORMALLY OPENING YOUR SEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND WELCOMING YOU TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA.
